1: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

hour, after which time the Kuwait diver is dragged out of the water and huddles in some spot on the ship looking more dead than alive. He may average four shifts a day, making a total of 40 dives; O'Shea states that under excellent conditions the Trucial divers average 50 dives a day.[28] During this time he has spent almost one hour under water. Ten dives are not difficult, nor are 50 excessive in one day for anyone experienced; but day after day and week after week the diving goes on — for four months. When the season is over, the diver has weathered the impossible; he has probably completed over 3,000 dives in from 30 to 50 feet of water, and has spent over 50 hours under the surface of the Persian Gulf — that is, over a full forty-hour week without air, valiantly striving to gather all the oysters he can see through his blood-shot and irritated eyes, which become less sensitive with each dive.

Every ten days or so the divers do get a day of rest, and if the *shamal* is blowing they have to wait it out, as it roils the water. Occasionally they have to go ashore to bury a diver who fails to complete his 3,000 dives. It is not surprising that there are one or two empty stations on each boat; their occupants lie huddled corpse-like under their cloaks in some part of the ship, too sick from scurvy or plain fatigue to dive. After they have been at it for many weeks, the divers are apt to get convulsive shivers when they come out of the water for their rest, even though the temperature may be 110° F. and their tenders are covered with a lather of sweat. There are few, if any, white men who could endure just one day of such punishment; the Arab could not either except for his belief that Allah is merciful and that a Paradise awaits him.

Every dhow has to put in for water and food every three weeks or so. In recent years the pearling fleet has used the oil company's pier at Ras Tanura for water, but vessels have been known to replenish their water supply from some of the submarine springs which gush into the Persian Gulf. A diver goes down with an empty skin and opens it in the potable stream; he can bring up fairly fresh water by this means. One of thse submarine springs,

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case stories one hears about the amazing power of the Arabs to stay under water from 5 to 10 minutes or more are absurd.

[28] R. O'Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

1: Bolsa C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

[502] One of th[e]se submerged springs, located a few miles north of Jubail, has been marked by a spar buoy by order of King Ibn Saud.

O'Shea states that while the divers on the Trucial Coast are rarely attacked by sharks, about 30 were attacked and two killed around 1940.[27] Whitelock states that the Arabs claimed that the danger of sharks was ever present, but that their worst fear was from the saw fish, which had been known to cut divers completely in two.[28]

Rihani writes that what the Persian Gulf pearl diver dreads most is the *dawl*. However, he apparently does not realize what the *dawl* is, merely quoting Sheikh Khalifah ibn Muhammad al-Nabhani's *History of Bahrein:* "The *dawl* is a semi-fluid animal, about the size of a man's hand, round in shape, with a multitude of tendons about two feet in length, resembling a network of silk. It has no power of locomotion, but is driven by the waves and currents hither and thither. If it comes in contact with the body of man, it burns it, leaving a deep scar; and if it is lifted out of the water and left in the sun for five minutes, it dissolves." [29]

The zoologist will immediately recognize this description of the *dawl* as a jellyfish. It is in fact a small bell-shaped jellyfish with two to three foot-long tentacles. The *dawl* swims at any level and is practically invisible underwater; thus the divers cannot keep away from the stinging tentacles, which will burn the body and can put out an eye. Along the Ras Tanura peninsula, the *dawl* is most often seen near the surface shortly before flood tides.

There is a species of needle urchin (*Diadema*) in the Persian Gulf with spines from one or two feet long.[30] It is known that these spines will produce nasty slow-healing wounds if bumped into under water. This urchin may be the cause of some of the open sores on the divers' legs, although salt water alone could cause them, for the Persian Gulf has the highest salt content of all the ocean bodies, and constant immersion in salt water is known to produce a rash. However, as the *Diadema* is black and several

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 138.
[28] H. H. Whitelock, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[29] A. Rihani, *op. cit.*, p. 280.
[30] *Diadema* was first reported from the Persian Gulf by this author: A. H. Clark and R. LeB. Bowen, Jr., "Echinoderms of Saudi Arabia," *American Museums Novitates*, No. 1390 (1949).

3: Bowen C-4 (1945-1947) 1951 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2

stinging tentacles that can easily put out an eye. There is also a needle urchin (*Diadema*), first reported from the Persian Gulf in 1949.[9] This urchin has spines more than a foot long, which can cause nasty, slow-healing wounds. However, as the urchin is several feet in diameter, black, and slow-moving, it is more easily avoided than the dawl.

Pearl divers suffer from a variety of diseases, most of which can be directly traced to their occupation. Open sores and skin ulcers result from encounters with the dawl and scrapes against coral and other sharp objects. Suppuration of the eardrums, rheumatism, and nosebleeds are common. Inflamed eyes are always a sign of the pearl diver. Persian Gulf divers are more susceptible to the "bends" than divers who use suits, since they must surface as rapidly as possible.

Divers never eat while they are working. When the day's diving is finished, the diver has some rice, dates, and tea, but not much else; sleep is his only energy builder. Every 10 days or so the divers get a rest, and every three weeks or so the dhows put in for food and water unless they have been revictualed at sea.

In recent years Ras Tanura has become a center of activity for the pearling fleet off its shores; for the oil company's installations can now pump an abundance of fresh water into the water tanks of the dhows much faster than it can be transferred by waterskins. The larger vessels anchor for the night on the banks; the smaller vessels sometimes take shelter if it is available. Some vessels of the pearling fleet replenish their water supply from the submarine springs that gush into the Persian Gulf in numerous places along the Arabian littoral. Relatively fresh water can be brought up in a waterskin by a diver. One of these springs, marked by a spar buoy, is to be found a few miles north of Jubail.

The first duty of the day on a pearling dhow is opening the previous day's oysters, which are heaped on deck in a large pile so that no one knows who found the oyster which may produce the rare gem. The muscles of the oysters relax enough overnight so that it is not difficult to open them. Less than a third of the oysters yield pearls, and these are usually only very small seed pearls.

Pearls are sometimes bought on the pearl banks by brokers who travel around in their own boats trying to get the best pearls before other brokers hear of them, and trying to get a valuable pearl before a nakhoda realizes its value. But whether the pearls are sold on the banks or at Bahrein, they

[9] A. H. Clark and R. LeB. Bowen, Jr., Echinoderms of Tarut Bay and Vicinity, Saudi Arabia, Amer. Museum Novitates, No. 1390, 1949.

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 MI Middle East
Maritu - Arabs MK2

CHAPTER IV

PEARL DIVERS OF THE EAST COAST

ALONG the East Coast of Arabia are located the largest pearl fisheries in the world. Pearl fishing has been the occupation of that part of Arabia for many centuries. Probably a hundred thousand Arabs are engaged in this hard and dangerous work throughout the summer months. Half a million people must depend on these divers for their livelihood. This is not a large percentage of the inhabitants of Arabia, but the pearl divers are worthy of consideration, for the outside world has come into closer contact with them than with any other Arab community in the entire peninsula. As might be expected, the coast cities contain artisans, laborers, a few date gardeners, and merchants. These differ in no significant way from similar classes elsewhere. The pearl diving community is unique.

Nothing can exceed the barrenness of the coast where these men live. From Kuwait in the north to Ras el Kheima in the south, a distance of three hundred miles, scarcely a green thing is to be seen, except for a few miles of date gardens at Katif and a smaller number at Dibai. The water available for drinking is brackish and almost undrinkable in many places. The inhabitants of Umm el Qaiwain, one of these towns, "drink mud," to quote the Arabs. The coast is so utterly unproductive that all food must be imported, and in some places even the fuel and drinking water.

houses, one for each ḥamūlah. In addition to the public madāfah which exists in the community, distinguished and affluent personages often keep up private guest-houses because hospitality is considered an important duty among the fellahin and Bedouin alike.

A coffee-house may be found in village situated close to a town or in large rural settlements.

The women -- who generally do not participate in the conversations of the men in the madāfah -- meet and chat at the well of the village. There are, of course, many rural places in Palestine which have no fresh water spring and where the local residents as well as their flocks drink the rain water accumulated in cisterns built adjacent to, or under every house. But where there is a well, the women have a chance to spend some time together and chat when they make their daily trips to the well to draw water and bring it home. At the well they are often joined by youths and even men.

The villagers who lived in the town for some time may become influential back home, because they are familiar with the social conventions of the big world, have come in touch with effendis and rich personages. They are regarded as successful, particularly if they increased their material wealth while away from the village. Among them may be former policemen who returned to the village after the completion of their term of service. As these had been associated with the inside of the State machinery and know how to "take care" of affairs, the villagers approach them for advice and guidance in legit-